1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

621 is dependent on its ritual state, and for the maintaining of this all are responsible. Thus, joining a long-house always involves ritual incorporation.

621 20. Further, each long-house community possesses two important officiants.
791 First comes the *tuai burong* or augur,[1] who takes auguries on all occasions of
622 moment and who is generally responsible for the ritual well-being of the long-house. Every long-house community also has a *tuai rumah* or house headman, whose principal duty is the safeguarding and administering of the customary law. Within his community the *tuai rumah* is the custodian of *adat*, its juridicial warden and principal arbiter. In all other matters however—political, economic and ritual—his authority is negligible, and he is in no sense a chief. For neither of these positions is there any rigid dogma of succession: to both any male cognate may succeed.

Summary

621 21. Finally, we return to the intrinsic corporate groups of Iban society—its
592 *bilek* families. These economically self-sufficient, allodial units are essentially
554 autonomous, and have a prescriptive right to decide the whereabouts of their place of abode. This means that the Iban long-house community is an open and not a closed group, for its component *bilek* families are joined in free association from which withdrawal is always possible. At bottom, therefore, a long-house consists of a federation of independent families whose privately owned apartments have been built side by side to produce a single, attenuated structure. An appreciation of this basic fact is imperative to the proper understanding of Iban social organization. From the outset, an Iban long-house must be conceived of not as a unified group, but rather as a territorial aggregation of discrete units, not as a communal pavilion, but as a terrace of privately owned houses. Within the long-house *bilek* families are at parity with one another. Differentiation in terms of wealth and influence there always is, subordination there certainly is not. Jurally each *bilek* family is a power unto itself, managing its own affairs and acknowledging no other family to be its master. Thus, while a long-house is multipartite it is without any kind of hierarchical organization. Under Iban *adat* all men are equals. During his lifetime a man may acquire high prestige and become an honoured leader, but rank is not inheritable and there is no institution of chieftainship. Iban society is classless and egalitarian, and its members
[181] untrammelled individualists, aggressive and proud in demeanour.

[787] [1]The Iban possess an elaborate system of augury based, in the main, on the behaviour of certain sacred birds.

1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

Part IV

THE ECONOMICS OF AGRICULTURE

Introduction

161. We have singled out the autonomy of the *bilek* family as a fundamental feature of Iban economic organization. Let us now examine this proposition in greater detail, devoting our attention, in particular, to the economics of *padi* cultivation. We have seen that the Iban *bilek* family is an allodial group, possessing land and property in its own right. It is likewise an independent entity economically, for each *bilek* family manages its own farm (*umai*), producing as best it can the *padi* and other crops which it needs for its own subsistence. In agricultural matters, there is, among the Iban, an absence of any kind of communal ownership, production or consumption—a state of affairs entirely consistent with the principles of social structure enunciated in the first part of this report. Individualism is one of the salient values of Iban society, and in economic pursuits it is competition rather than co-operation which motivates *bilek* families.

The Organization of Labour

162. The *bilek* family, we have noted, is a small group numerically and a simple one genealogically. Both of these features have an important bearing on economic organization. The simple structure of the *bilek* family, arising from the fact that it is based essentially on the elementary family, means that among its members there is congruence of interest to a marked degree. The prevalence of partition, whereby large *bilek* families break up into autonomous units, precludes the existence of extended families; and only about 7% of *bilek* families contain married siblings, i.e. who are living as members of the same household. This means that in the great majority of cases a man is working for his own immediate family, and the same, of course, applies to women. Further, the simplicity in structure of the *bilek* family has as a concomitant, smallness in size. About 80% of Iban *bilek* families fall within the range of from two to seven members per family, and households of more than ten members are very rare, occurring in only about 2% of cases. Here clearly, we are faced with factors of profound importance in economic organization. Let us then examine the situation more closely, taking Rumah Nyala as an example.

163. In May, 1950, there were in Rumah Nyala, 25 *bilek* families[1] with a total membership of 140 persons of all ages. About 66% were adults (i.e. 15 years of age and over), while 34% were children. Of the adults, 41 were males and 52 females; and of the children, 30 were boys and 17 girls. In size the 25 *bilek* families ranged from 3 to 10 members; with a mean of 5·6, a median of 5, and a mode of 3 persons per household. Let us now turn to an analysis of the labour resources of these 25 *bilek* families, remembering that each *bilek* family is an independent unit economically. In assessing the labour force available to each *bilek* family we are interested only in those persons who were regularly engaged

[1] These 25 *bilek* families were divided into 26 farming units; c.f. Footnote 1 in p. 38.

2: Howell M-5 (ca. 1908) 1908-1910
OC6 Iban OC6

695 The Sea Dyaks have their own rules of logic in their courts of law, which are more approximate to axioms than proverbs. To listen to an advocate defending their cases is certainly worth the while if one is conversant with the classical language. They are a political race, more so than the Malays or
681 Chinese. With them all offences are fineable. Apologies are not accepted in their society in accordance with their custom.

• 181 It is only those who live among the Sea Dyaks who can perceive the improvement they have made under the Government of H. H. the Rajah of Sarawak. Their morals are good; they are hospitable to strangers; their religion is a combination of various superstitions; they are fond of going to war in order to capture heads and to get booty; their principal occupation is paddy planting.

(To be continued.)

[p. 4]

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

known, may easily result in limited views and imperfect conceptions. But when his residence has extended over many years, and he knows the language as well as his own; when he has had constant opportunities of observing their tone and conduct in every relation of life, and of hearing how they talk and think on every imaginable subject, and of seeing how they behave at home as well as abroad—how they bear themselves, not only to an occasional white man whom they meet, but also to each other in social dealings—when he thus lives in close touch with them at every point, he cannot but obtain a thorough understanding of the realities of their lives.

And the Sea Dyaks are generally a very communicative people. They will willingly give information about every belief and custom, and will quietly discuss every practice and every event, good or bad; and it needs only a little patience and sympathy to enable one to get an insight into the working of their minds, and to realize the true character of their actions in the struggles, the comedies, or the tragedies of their lives.

Mr. Gomes is thus able to make the Sea Dyak live before us in genuine colours. We can see this dusky son of the jungle in his beliefs and fears, which are many, in his work and in his play, in his ugly faults and amiable virtues, in his weaknesses and in his abilities. And I think that everyone who reads his pages will feel that henceforth he knows the Sea Dyak of Sarawak better than he ever knew him before, and will come to the conclusion that, in spite of his faults, he is a very likeable man.

The Sea Dyaks, then, are worth knowing. They constitute a very valuable element in the population of Sarawak, not only from their numbers, but also from their force of character. They are active, hardworking,

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

industrious, ready to earn an honest penny when they have the chance; and in their domestic relations are amiable and hospitable towards strangers, and when treated with civility and sympathy, all their good points come to the surface. They work hard at rice-planting, which, it is true, is of a very primitive sort, but it is the best they know, and as good as that practised by their Mohammedan neighbours, the Malays. If some simple system of irrigation could be introduced among them, especially in lowland cultivation, this, their main industry, would be far more productive than it is, and it would be a real boon to the country at large. They have adventured upon the cultivation of other products when the way has been made clear to them, which is an evidence of their capacity for progress. They penetrate and traverse far-off jungles in search of indiarubber and gutta-percha to add to their earnings. An increasing number of them are keen upon book-learning, as Mr. Gomes points out. They form the Rajah's soldiers and guards, and are capable of useful service in subordinate positions as officers. And thus these people, who were once only known as fighters, pirates, and head-takers, are now a real influence in the evolution of a better civilization and a more fruitful era to come in those lands. The civilizing, Christianizing force no doubt works slowly; but there it is, and, comparing present with past, we can see it. A large influx of white people of the usual colonist class would doubtless be too strong for them, and would push them out of the way; but with a favourable chance, which they now have, of working out a salvation for themselves, I think the Sea Dyaks have a better future before them than Mr. Gomes appears to anticipate.

It is interesting to watch the process of a gradual enlightening going on among such a race when brought

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

CHAPTER IV

THE DYAK CHARACTER

General remarks—Kind to children—Industrious—Frugal—Honest—Two cases of theft—Curses—Honesty of children—Truthful—Curious custom—*Tugong Bula*—Hospitable—Morals—Desire for children—Divorce—Adultery—Dyak law concerning adultery—Dyak view of marriage—Unselfishness—Domestic affection—Example.

THE Dyaks are seen at their best in their own jungle homes, in the midst of their natural surroundings. The man who has only met the hangers-on of the towns has little idea of their true character. To one who knows them well, who has lived among them, and seen them at their work and at their play, there is something very attractive about the Dyaks. They are very human, and in many points are very like children, with the child's openness in telling his thoughts and showing his feelings, with the child's want of restraint in gratifying his wishes, the child's alternate moods of selfishness and affection, obedience and obstinacy, restlessness and repose. Like children, they live in the present, and take little thought for the future. Like children, they love passionately those who are kind to them, and trust absolutely those whom they recognize as their superiors.

They are cheerful, merry, and pleasure-loving. Fine dress is a passion, and the love, in both men and women, for bright colours is very marked, and yet somehow the

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

cooking their own food and doing most of their own work. They were cut away from all the superstitious customs of their people, and received a certain amount of moral and religious training. After three or four years of such school life they were ready to return to their old surroundings, taking with them the lessons they had learnt.

For the present, at any rate, there is no need for the Dyak to take up new industries. What he wants is to be taught to do the work he has to do more thoroughly, and to be released from the bondage of superstition and the constant fear of evil spirits in which he lives. The problem of his future will work itself out by a natural process. When the present sources of supply fail him, necessity will force him to take up new industries.

My schoolboys came from different Dyak villages, but the majority of them were boys from Saribas. The Dyaks of that district are more anxious to improve themselves than other Dyak races. The following incident will show how keen they are to learn to read. A party of Saribas Dyaks going on a gutta-hunting expedition asked for a copy of the first Dyak reading-book, because one of them could read, and thought he would teach the others in the evenings when they were not at work. And this is indeed what did happen, and when the party returned most of them were able to read. The Saribas women are just as keen as the men, and many of them have been taught to read by some Dyak friend. I have myself noticed, when holding services for the Christians in some villages in Saribas, how many of those present were able to use the Dyak Prayer-Book and follow the service and read the responses.

A Dyak schoolmaster, who had taught in Banting for many years, afterwards worked as the Government clerk

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

at Betong in Saribas. He told me that he was struck by the number of Dyak men and women in Saribas who could write, and how they often wrote letters to their friends who were away, and received letters from them.

The school programme for the day was as follows :

5.45 *a.m.*—The two boys whose turn it was to cook, and the two boys whose turn it was to sweep out the school-room and the lower room of the Mission House, would get up and begin their duties.

6.30 *a.m.*—A gong would be struck telling the boys to come to breakfast. They would all go to the kitchen and have their meal, consisting of rice with a little salt fish or vegetables.

7 *a.m.*—The boys would be told what manual work they had to do : either they would weed the paths, or cut the grass, or work at their different vegetable gardens. Sometimes they would go out into the jungle to get fire-wood. At Temudok, where the soil was good, the school-boys had excellent vegetable gardens.

8.30 *a.m.*—A gong would be struck to let them know they were to stop working and have a bath, after which, at 8.45 a.m., there would be a short service.

9-11 *a.m.*—Morning school.

12 *noon.*—Midday meal.

2-4 *p.m.*—Afternoon school.

5 *p.m.*—Evensong, to which some of the Dyaks from the village would come.

6 *p.m.*—Evening meal.

7-8 *p.m.*—Preparation for next day's lessons.

9 *p.m.*—Two or three short prayers and one verse of a children's evening hymn, after which the boys would go to bed.

10: Sandin I-5 (1949-1955) 1956 OC6 Iban OC6

181 All that need be said here is that Sandin's material documents precisely the sweep West and North of a group which in my first sentence, I termed "a great people". That they are a *people*, the most homogenous in Borneo, has been disputed from time to time for political or pedantic reasons. But anyone with a wide knowledge knew otherwise, as did the Brookes. And the present material amply elaborates the issue. The adjective great I used to indicate the numerical strength of the Sea Dayaks, who clearly swept out under pressure of population. But also I meant it to suggest a quality of the people *individually* and *collectively*—and in no Borneo culture except Kelabit does this distinction vary more from one extreme of not to the other of is according to situation. These *tusut* show a greatness of spirit, discipline and pioneering, which is still much a part of their mood today, although at present overlain with a good deal that is more trivial, and probably temporary.

To some extent, this derives from the fundamentally classless, "democratic" structure of Sea Dayak society. There are "aristocrats", like Sandin himself, who "go back" to Sengalang Burong. But this is seldom *explicit*. And it is overlain by the much deeper feeling that *every* Sea Dayak goes back to Sengalang Burong. The Land Dayaks also have a classless society (I am using this term loosely); what *they* lack is any sense of unity, any shared *remembered* experience outside the local group. They do no *feel* themselves a people. Perhaps the people who are nearest the Sea Dayaks in this respect are the Dusuns. They were the late invaders of North Borneo, contemporarily with the Sea Dayaks in the south. Unfortunately, and despite the scholarly efforts of Mr. I. H. N. Evans, the chronology of Dusun traditions has been almost lost. (I do my "dating" for them from the great value jars brought traditionally on their westward expansion out of "Nonok Kerangang"; two of these I got for the Sarawak Museum, and many others I examined in Dusun country.)

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114 In the full material collected by Benedict Sandin, virtually *every* important piece of Dayak custom and law is related to a specific event, pin-pointed on one or several of the 40-50 basic genealogies. On this, we have a fascinatingly exact record. A whole series of other events, formative in group life (such as

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Iban estates that are probated are composed of real property, such as farmlands or rubber gardens to which government-issued permits are held. When a permit to such property is inherited by an individual, he has the name on the permit changed from that of the deceased to his own in the District Office, and pays the fee for the transfer. When several persons inherit land under permit, it may be necessary for new permits to be issued, if the land is divided, to each heir and payment of the probate charge is divided among the heirs. The crucial factor, of which Ibans are well aware, is that the transfer must be made in the District Office, according to Government regulations, otherwise the permit is invalid. Hence, the beginnings of the practice of probate.

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The development of Sibu as an administrative center has been important in the life of the Ibans of this District in the shift of the locus of power for legitimizing activities from the bilik-family and long-house community to Government. One of the strongest facts of Iban society is the high degree of fragmentation and the tradition of every man doing what is right in his heart. There never has been any over-riding "tribal unity" despite the use of a common language and the sharing of a common culture. Thus, the power held by the various offices in Sibu, including law enforcement, courts, the penqulu, and control of natural resources such as land and timber, has resulted in a centripetal pull on the Iban towards the pasar where he must handle many of his business affairs,

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 168]

592 the acquisition of food and marketable goods. At a general meeting of
591 the tuai rumah and tuai bilik shortly before Asun's departure for Limbang,
178 each man, beginning with the tuai rumah, spoke as eloquently as possible,
183 trying to impress upon Asun how much Ganai had spent on his support, food,
434 education and clothing.

> "Now, you are going to earn wages, so don't forget your parents who have supported you all your life" (Diatu' nuan deka' makai gaji. Anang enda' ingat ka sida apai indai ke udah melanja ka nuan.

Even if the move of children to Sibu or elsewhere for employment, leaves no one in the bilik to look after the parents, this often is preferable, even sought, if the children contribute financially towards the
[181] support of the parents. For the Iban is cash-conscious and cash-hungary, money always being inadequate to meet their demands and desires. With only 36 per cent of the Iban population self-sufficient in rice, a majority of the families must buy this staple for a period from a few weeks to half-a-year. The uncertain prices of rubber, pepper, ginger and other products makes wage-earning an attractive situation, both for the earner and his parents or in-laws whom he may be called on to help. Hence, the changing pattern in this cardinal rule of Iban postmarital residence.

591 The composition of the bilik-family fluctuates between the nuclear
592 family and the stem family in a majority of cases. There are a number of
178 reasons for this fluctuation, some of which are directly related to the
[161] in-migration of Ibans to Sibu. First, the fluctuation is related with an increase in population and a concept of limited goods. In Rumah Nyala,

343 the layout of the settlements. In the case of Rumah Gaong, Enchul has
[231] built a cattle-shed for his 15 head of cattle, a watering pond, and
[491] garage-storage shed two miles distance from Rumah Gaong and at the end of the three mile road which he had extended into his property from the Durin Road.

361 Site plans for Rumah Nyala and Rumah Gaong are included on the following pages to indicate visually the relative positions of the buildings in the settlements.

D. Land Tenure and Use

423 To describe the Ibans as a land-hungry people is no misstatement.
[181] Previously, they desired new land for the practice of shifting cultivation. Today, many realize the economic potential of land on a highly inflated market, and some are sellers, other speculators.

The movements of various groups of Ibans into the Sibu District were similar in the practices and principles followed in use and tenure. When members of a community entered a new area, they discussed and decided among themselves how much land would be needed by each family involved. Each family in turn was allotted the amount agreed upon-ten fathoms, twenty fathoms - on the water's edge, and then the distance cleared from the river depended upon the labor-force and industry of each family. But, one principle that was firmly applied was that each unit had to clear straight away from the river and parallel to families on either side. It may be imagined that this gave rise to a number of land cases in which the issue

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 339]

IBAN CULTURE

186 From birth to death, the Iban is impressed with his ethnic identity vis-a-vis other ethnic groups. Through legends and myths, told on the longhouse ruai or broadcast over Radio Malaysia, he is made aware of the great crowd of ancestral witnesses who surround him, and to whom he owes his life. Although the group of which he immediately is aware may be limited to his longhouse community, he readily identifies with fellow Ibans of other districts and divisions through sharing a common language, adat and corpus of beliefs. According to his need and convenience, the kinship system may be manipulated to include or exclude fellow Ibans.

• 181 In the pluralistic state of Sarawak, the Iban are the most aggressive of the indigenous people. This characteristic of aggression is, at least in part, a reflection of the confidence which the Iban feel in their self-identity. Casual observers have commented on the strength of the Iban, the pride of the individual in himself and in his ethnic group. And Freeman, through intense observation, described them as "untrammelled individualists, aggressive and proud in demeanour."

195 [181] The strong sense of personal and corporate indentity of the Ibans has been one of the factors which has helped them become the most numerous and most powerful of the indigenous people. During their invasion of

We have seen that less than one half the bilik-families have enough rice to last them from one harvest until the next, and must supplement their own production with sago, rice purchased from the sale of produce or from wages, or grants from the Welfare Department. Again, not all men show the aggressive drives manifest in Keling, and personality types ranges from the strong, dominant male who is quite self-assured, to the manang bali', the transvestite who, with confused sex-role identity, escapes unbearable conflict through assumption of the healer's role.[5]

The ideal of self-sufficiency, with strong emphases upon independence, skill, courage, persistence and adventure, has been the norm by which individual performances have been measured. Consequently, while Iban society may in one sense be described as egalitarian, as we will discuss in the next section of this chapter, it also is highly competitive, and from the early history of Iban predations until the present, many members strive to get ahead of their fellows.

Judged by the scale of self-sufficiency, traditional Iban society was divided into three classes. At the highest level were those members who were able to farm successfully, achieving thereby an independence from others and a reputation for good standing with the gods. If a fortuitous

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[5] The Iban shaman or manang does not seek acts of bravery (ukai nuju pemerani), yet, in an interesting bit of irony, after his ordination, (bebangun) it is he who enjoins in battle the fears of other members of Iban society as projected in antu and incubus (buyu').

Upon the return of a man from a trip offerings of thanksgiving were made. In 1971, when Minggu anak Janti of Rumah Nyala returned on leave from the Commandos, a special service called niat ("Good Luck") was observed at Bukit Aup. Sacrifices were made and special food prepared to give thanks for the safe return of Minggu after months away from home.

Mobility among the Ibans is not limited to physical movement but includes also the flexibility which marks their social organization and culture. We have discussed the relative ease of attachment to and detachment from the bilik-family, and how the very vagueness of the boundaries of the kin-group, kaban, permits inclusion of members of other ethnic groups as well as other Ibans. Ibans who marry members of other groups still are included in their natal kin-group and looked to for hospitality and other help by their kinsmen. In the problematic area of land tenure and the law which prohibits Chinese owning land in the Native Area, several pengulu have adopted Chinese men as grandsons, thereby legitimizing land holdings of the Chinese in the Native Area.

The adoption of values and styles of other ethnic groups also is related to the cultural mobility of the Ibans, and even in remote longhouses it is not uncommon to find walls plastered with pictures from the "Asia Magazine" or American west coast newspapers.[21] Iban young men and women are sensitive to new styles (Iban, stail), and many young men are natty dressers with long hair, low-slung flair trousers and even simulated leather

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[21] These are shipped in large quantities to local shopkeepers and used for wrapping purchases.

183 The Ibans are activists and with their orientation to achievement,
178 the more determined ones work to make certain that good luck comes to them. Less reliance is placed upon ubat, pengaroh and engkerabun and more upon education of young people, contacts with kinsmen and friends for exploitation, and awareness of opportunities for obtaining Government grants and
[654] employment. Recently, when the Agriculture Department announced that it would give aid to pepper planters, more than 2,800 Ibans made application
[464] through the Sibu office.[29] When the Sibu Rural District Office advertised for one position of an office boy, 61 young men, most of the Iban, applied
[462] for the job. The division of labor described in Chapter Four in which women do the main work on the farms and men supplement the family's income with wages is an increasing pattern among Ibans of this District to ensure good luck and a good life.

181 In summary, the culture of the Ibans has been one of the most
183 important factors in their becoming the most aggressive of the indigenous peoples of Sarawak. Individualists and achievement - oriented through the processes of socialization and enculturation, the Ibans moved into the Rajang subduing, driving out or assimilating the other groups. Motivated by a grammar of values including self-sufficiency and class distinctions

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[29] Ironically, the grants are in the amount of M$ .05 per pepper vine. Most Ibans who make application must pay five dollars to a literate Chinese or Iban to complete the forms for them, and spend on an average of ten dollars in travel and meals, so the grants pay off only when made for more than 300 vines.

181 183 deriving therefrom; cooperation for the benefit of the group and competition for maximization of individual situations; the ideal of the equality of the self vis-a-vis others; the encouragement of mobility and opportunism through speech and example; and an activistic approach to obtaining good luck in their undertakings, many Ibans have found in their traditional culture values which have been pre-adaptive for their participation in [177] modern society. Some have related to modern society through adjustments in behavioral patterns in rural areas. Others have entered the pasar, where despite numerous changes, they still have maintained their ethnic identity.

128 We now will consider the characteristics of those Ibans who have moved into the pasar, together with brief biographical accounts of four individuals who have been selected as being representative of those who retain their residence in the rural areas and commute daily to Sibu, and those who have moved into Sibu for work and study.